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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/444,675	11/22/1999	TORU KOIZUMI	35.C14029	8958

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EXAMINER

LONG, HEATHER R

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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2615

DATE MAILED: 02/28/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/444,675

Applicant(s)

KOIZUMI ET AL.

Examiner

Heather R Long

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 02 November 2004.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-9 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-9 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☒ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 22 November 1999 is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☒ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Drawings

1. Figure 1 should be designated by a legend such as --Prior Art-- because only that which is old is illustrated. See MPEP § 608.02(g).
2. The drawings are objected to as failing to comply with 37 CFR 1.84(p)(5) because they include the following reference character(s) not mentioned in the description: Figs. 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 11 include the reference character "1d", Fig. 19 includes the reference character "31", and Fig. 23 includes the reference character "231".
3. The drawings are objected to as failing to comply with 37 CFR 1.84(p)(4) because reference character "1d" has been used to designate both a pixel (Figs. 3, 6, 7, and 9-11) and a level shift circuit (Fig. 12).
4. The drawings are objected to as failing to comply with 37 CFR 1.84(p)(4) because reference character "231" has been used to designate both an output apparatus (Fig. 23) and a clock generator (Fig. 25).

Corrected drawing sheets in compliance with 37 CFR 1.121(d), or amendment to the specification to add the reference character(s) in the description in compliance with 37 CFR 1.121(b) are required in reply to the Office action to avoid abandonment of the application. Any amended replacement drawing sheet should include all of the figures appearing on the immediate prior version of the sheet, even if only one figure is being amended. Each drawing sheet submitted after the filing date of an application must be labeled in the top margin as either "Replacement Sheet" or "New Sheet" pursuant to 37 CFR

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1.121(d). If the changes are not accepted by the examiner, the applicant will be notified and informed of any required corrective action in the next Office action.

The objection to the drawings will not be held in abeyance.

Specification

5. The title of the invention is not descriptive. A new title is required that is clearly indicative of the invention to which the claims are directed.

6. The disclosure is objected to because of the following informalities:

a. Page 14, line 11: change "SE" to --SEL--.

Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

7. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

8. Claims 1, 5, and 8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shintani et al. (U.S. Patent 5,875,034) in view of the admitted prior art, and further in view of Watanabe et al. (U.S. Patent 6,686,958).

Regarding claim 1, Shintani et al. teaches a sensor comprising a sensor block (CCD) including a pixel unit comprising a plurality of pixels each including a light-receiving element and a signal processing block

(signal processing unit 102) for processing a signal output from said sensor block (col. 7, lines 26-31). As the CCD outputs pixel information to the signal processing block, a scanning unit for selecting a pixel of said pixel unit is inherently taught. Shintani et al. teaches a single electric power voltage input terminal for externally inputting an external power voltage (main battery EB in power supply unit 109) from outside of the sensor (Fig. 2A, col. 7, 56-58); and a control circuit (DC/DC converter 200) for generating a plurality of different voltages from the electric power voltage (main battery EB in power supply unit 109) externally input at the single electric power voltage input terminal (col. 9, lines 7-25). Shintani et al. teaches that the power supply unit 109 is adapted for supplying a high voltage of a predetermined level to the CCD 101, and a lower voltage of a predetermined level to other individual circuit elements (col. 7, lines 52-55), which reads on a power supply voltage used in a sensor block that is higher than a power supply voltage supplied to another individual circuit element. However, Shintani et al. fails to teach that the sensor is integrated on a single semiconductor substrate and that the control circuit is arranged on the substrate.

Referring to the admitted prior art, the admitted prior art teaches a sensor integrated on a single semiconductor substrate (page 1, lines 10-12).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate the practice of

fabricating camera elements on a single integrated chip taught by the admitted prior art into the camera of Shintani et al. One of ordinary skill would have been motivated to make such a modification to shorten the time needed to transport pixel data from the image sensor to the signal processing unit. However, Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art still fails to teach that the control circuit is arranged on the substrate.

Referring to the Watanabe et al. reference, Watanabe et al. discloses a camera wherein the control circuit (60) is arranged on the main substrate (81) along with the other components (Figs. 9 and 10; col. 8, lines 8-14).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have used the teaching of arranging the control circuit onto the main substrate with the other components as taught by Watanabe et al. in the camera system disclosed by Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art in order to provide a device that has a substantially lower power consumption and a higher expected reliability, due to the reduced number of external connections.

Regarding claim 5, Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art and in view of Watanabe et al. discloses all the subject matter as discussed with respect to claim 1 as well as the admitted prior art teaches that the light-receiving element is a buried photodiode (page 2, line 5).

One of ordinary skill would have been motivated to use the buried

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photodiode of the admitted prior art in the sensor of Shintani et al. to obtain a signal with a higher S/N ratio.

Regarding claim 8, Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art and in view of Watanabe et al. discloses all the subject matter as discussed with respect to claim 1 as well as Shintani et al. teaches an A/D converter for converting the signal (Fig. 4A, item 305). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill to incorporate the A/D conversion into the signal-processing block.

9. Claim 2 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art in view of Watanabe et al. as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Mann et al. (U.S. Patent 6,121,087).

Regarding claim 2, Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art in view of Watanabe et al. teach the apparatus of claim 1. See above.

Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art do not teach that a gate insulating layer of at least some insulated gate transistors of said sensor block is thicker than that of an insulated gate transistor used in said signal processing block. Mann et al. teaches that the application of a higher voltage will require a thicker gate oxide layer to prevent oxide-breakdown (col. 6, lines 34-42). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate the practice of growing a thicker oxide when a higher voltage is being applied taught by Mann et al. into the apparatus of Shintani et al. in view

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of the admitted prior art to make an image sensing apparatus that uses a higher power voltage, and thus thicker gate oxide layers, for the sensor block and a lower power voltage, and thus thinner gate oxide layers, for the signal processing block. One of ordinary skill would have been motivated to make such a modification to fabricate the appropriate thickness of oxide for the voltage that shall be used upon it.

10. Claim 3 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art in view Watanabe et al. in view of Mann et al. as applied to claims 1 and 2 above, and further in view of Sawada et al. (U.S. Patent 6,184,516).

Regarding claim 3, Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art in view of Watanabe et al. teach the apparatus of claim 1. See above.

Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art in view of Mann et al. teach that the threshold voltages for the sensor block transistors are higher than the threshold voltages for the signal processing block transistors. See above. Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art in view of Watanabe et al. in view of Mann et al. do not teach that the well density of at least some insulated gate transistors of said sensor block is lower than that of an insulated gate transistor used in said signal processing block. Sawada et al. teaches a PMOS transistor 323 is formed on an n type well 19 whose impurity concentration is higher than that of the n type semiconductor substrate on which the n type well 19 is formed, and a PMOS transistor 324 is formed outside of the n type well 19 on the n type

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semiconductor substrate. The threshold voltage of PMOS transistor 323 formed on the n type well 19 is about -0.75 V, and that the threshold voltage of the PMOS transistor 324 formed outside of the n type well on the n type semiconductor substrate is about -0.29V (col. 6, line 61 - col. 7, line 8). Therefore, Sawada et al. teaches that the transistor formed in a substrate possessing a lower well impurity concentration will have a higher threshold voltage. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to combine the teaching of fabricating a transistor in a substrate with a lower impurity concentration to achieve a higher threshold voltage taught by Sawada et al. with the apparatus of Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art in view of Watanabe et al. in view of Mann et al. to make an image sensing apparatus whose signal processing block transistors use lower voltage, possess thinner gate oxide layers, and are fabricated in wells of lower impurity concentration than those of the transistors on the signal processing block. One of ordinary skill would have been motivated to make such a modification to reduce the overall power consumption of the chip.

11. Claim 4 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art in view of Watanabe et al. in view of Mann et al. as applied to claims 1 and 2 above, and further in view of Gardner et al. (U.S. Patent Application Publication 2002/0022325).

Regarding claim 4, Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art in view of Watanabe et al. teach the apparatus of claim 1. See above.

Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art in view of Mann et al. teach that the gate insulating layers of some transistors of said sensor block is thicker than that of an insulated gate transistor used in said signal processing block. See claim 2 above. Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art in view of Mann et al. do not teach that a threshold voltage of at least some insulated gate transistors of said sensor block is higher than that of an insulated gate transistor used in said signal processing block. Gardner et al. teaches that thinner gate oxides will require a lower threshold voltage [0008]. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate the teaching of having a lower threshold voltage when a transistor has a thinner gate oxide taught by Gardner et al. into the apparatus of Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art in view of Watanabe et al. in view of Mann et al. to make an image sensing apparatus whose transistors in the signal processing block use a lower power supply and possess a lower threshold voltage than the transistors on the signal processing block. One of ordinary skill would have been motivated to make such a modification to reduce the power consumption of the sensor block by using different power supplies and reduce the fabrication time by growing thinner oxides that require lower threshold voltages.

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12. Claim 6 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art in view of Watanabe et al. as applied to claims 1 and 5 above, and further in view of Tandon et al. (EP 0 254 497).

Regarding claim 6, Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art teach the apparatus of claim 5. See above. Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art do not teach that each pixel has a charge/voltage conversion unit connected to the buried photodiode through a transfer switch. Tandon et al. does teach that each pixel has a charge/voltage conversion unit (source follower 33) connected to a photodiode (14) through a transfer switch (phi. 1) (col. 3, lines 25-32). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate the charge/voltage conversion unit and transfer switches of Tandon et al. into the apparatus of Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art in view of Watanabe et al. to make an image sensing apparatus that uses a lower power supply for the signal processing block than the sensor and converts the photoelectric charge accumulated in the pixels into voltage when the charge is transferred. One of ordinary skill would have been motivated to make such a modification to control when the charges are transferred and converted to voltages.

13. Claim 7 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art in view of Watanabe et al. as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Vu et al. (U.S. Patent 6,025,875).

Regarding claim 7, Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art in view of Watanabe et al. teach the apparatus of claim 1. See above.

Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art do not teach that the sensor block and signal processing block are connected via a level shift circuit for shifting a signal level. Vu et al. teaches that the sensor block and signal processing block are connected via level shift circuit (coupling capacitor C_{CL}) for shifting a signal level (col. 4, lines 9-13). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate the level shift circuit of Vu et al. into the apparatus of Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art in view of Watanabe et al. to make an image sensing apparatus that supplies different voltages to the CCD and signal processor and uses a level shift circuit or shifting a signal level between the CCD and signal processor. One of ordinary skill would have been motivated to make such a modification to reduce signals' voltage level when they are to enter another functional unit that employs a lower voltage supply.

14. Claim 9 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art in view of Watanabe et al. as applied to claims 1 and 8 above, and further in view of well-known prior art.

Regarding claim 9, Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art in view of Watanabe et al. teach the apparatus of claim 8. See above.

Although Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art in view of Watanabe et al. do not teach a circuit for forming a luminance signal and a

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chrominance signal, the office takes Official Notice that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to separate the image data of Shintani et al. in view of the admitted prior art in view of Watanabe et al. into luminance and chrominance signals. One of ordinary skill would have been motivated to make such a modification to convert the image data into a format that is commonly used in signal processing methods.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Heather R Long whose telephone number is 703-305-0681. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon. - Thurs.: 7:00 am - 4:30 pm, and every other Fri.: 7:00 am - 3:30 pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's acting supervisor, Thai Tran can be reached on (703) 305-4725. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Heather R Long
Examiner
Art Unit 2615

HRL
February 15, 2005



TUAN HO
PRIMARY EXAMINER